

Huron, D. (1999). The new empiricism: Systematic musicology in a postmodern age *The 1999 Ernest Bloch Lectures*. University of California, Berkeley.
<http://musiccog.ohiostate.edu/Music220/Bloch.lectures/3.Methodology.html>

Claims

- Scholarly disciplines in the arts have much to gain by adapting empirical methods. He calls this the “new empiricism.”

The Problem of Induction

- No amount of observation can ever resolve the truth of some general statement.
- Karl Popper’s solutions: falsification and replication.

Philosophy of Methodology – Distinctions

- ***False-positive (theory-discarding) skeptics*** don’t accept a claim until they’ve failed to disprove it multiple times.
 - Evidence is often prospective and data-rich.
 - Claims are often closed (or adversarial) and more risky.
- ***False-negative (theory-conserving) skeptics*** don’t reject a claim until they have no justification for believing it.
 - Evidence is often retrospective and data-poor.
 - Claims are often open (or cooperative) and less risky.

Conclusions

- Methods are tools for research, not philosophical belief systems about the world.
- The main obstacle to selection of methods is the methodological inertial found in most disciplines.
- Disciplines are defined by their subject matter, not by their methods. Methods arise not from the subject of research, but by the riskiness of the claims and the availability of pertinent data.

Terms

epistemology – a theory of (how to acquire) knowledge.

methodology – any formal or semi-formal approach to acquiring insight or knowledge.

induction – inferences based on empirical evidence (rather than reasoning).

deduction – inferences based on reasoning (rather than evidence).

Positivism – knowledge derived from falsification, replication, and sensory experience (i.e., empirical evidence) is the exclusive source of all authoritative knowledge.

Postmodernism – It assumes there is no truth to be known. There is no objective perspective.

False positive skepticism – hypotheses ought to be rejected given the slightest contradicting evidence.

False negative skepticism – theories or hypotheses out to be conserved unless there is overwhelming contradicting evidence.